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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [KU](#)  
SUBJECT: KUWAITI PM HANDILY SURVIVES IMPEACHMENT

REF: KUWAIT 1154

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and  
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GoK: New Lease on Life?  
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¶1. (C) As widely predicted, Kuwaiti Prime Minister Shaykh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al Sabah -- in a closed door session -- survived on December 16 a 35-13 (one abstention) parliamentary vote of non-cooperation (reftel). The lopsided victory, which only required a simple majority vote, reinforced the view that the GoK all along had the requisite numbers in parliament to push forward its agenda, but had allowed itself to be buffaloed by Islamist and tribalist MPs (who numbered among the 13 opposition votes) into doubting that it had such a popular political mandate. Press and Embassy interlocutors alike now perceive a restored hope that the GoK might use its theoretically reinforced mandate to provide more vigorous and competent leadership to address national concerns.

¶2. (C) Commentary at the local level signals a renewed confidence in the PM, hope that the National Assembly might actually serve out a four year term, and optimism that we may now witness a respite from frivolous parliamentary attacks against the GoK. A triumphant Speaker of Parliament, Jassem Al-Khorafi, crowed to Ambassador December 13 that his earlier prediction to her the PM would submit to a grilling and prevail had been proven true, adding there were 'two more hurdles awaiting,' which he anticipated would be overcome easily. MP Saleh Ashour conveyed to poloff December 16 that the GoK's triumph in the vote has emboldened majority MPs to stand against future distractions launched by minority opposition MPs. Similarly, MP Ali Al-Rashed told poloff that the number of votes the PM received not only demonstrated a renewal of confidence in him, but indicated a reduction in tension between the legislative and executive branches. The victory also, he suggested, means that "the government has no excuse. It has a parliamentary majority, so any complaint depicting the National Assembly as hindering of development is now baseless."

Round Two: Interior Minister's December 17 Vote  
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¶3. (C) Opposition MPs, having failed to build sufficient cases in their December 8-9 grillings of four cabinet members (reftel), are widely expected to fail again in their December 17 vote of no confidence against Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al Sabah.

Comment: Democracy with a dash of patronage  
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¶4. (C) Kuwaitis take justifiable pride in the fact that their democratic system has now permitted the successful

parliamentary questioning of a sitting Prime Minister of the ruling Al Sabah family -- something they note would be inconceivable in most countries in the region. That having been said, Kuwaiti democracy has its own traditions, so it is perhaps unsurprising that in such a patronage and "wasta" (influence)-based culture, media pundits have openly speculated that the GoK spent literally millions (and perhaps tens of millions) of dollars to ensure today's successful outcome.

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